

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. In a telecommunications network, a method for processing a telephone call of a calling party to a called party, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for a communications connection from an originating address of the calling party to a terminating address of the called party;

retrieving calling plan information for the originating address;

determining a minimum cost period for completing the communications connection based on the calling plan information for the originating address; and

transmitting a notification message including the minimum cost period to the calling party from the telecommunications network.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party for transfer to a customer service center.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of verifying that the originating address of the calling party is authorized to receive the notification message.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting further comprises the step of audibly announcing the notification message.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting further comprises the step of displaying the notification message on a display screen.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the minimum cost period is at least one of a time of day, a day of a week, and a plurality of days.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying the minimum cost period on a web page.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of deactivating the transmission of the notification message after receiving a deactivation request.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of deactivating the transmission of the notification message after a predetermined period of time.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing a plurality of minimum cost periods to the calling party, after the calling party has made a plurality of telephone calls.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting occurs while the communications connection is being established within the telecommunications network.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party to abandon the telephone call after the step of transmitting the notification message.

13. A method within a telecommunication network of notifying a calling party of a minimum cost period for completing a telephone call, comprising the steps of:

receiving a network address corresponding to a telecommunications device that initiated the telephone call;

receiving billing rate data for the network address;

determining the minimum cost period for completing the telephone call based on the billing rate data for the network address during set-up of the telephone call; and

notifying the calling party of the minimum cost period prior to completing set-up of the telephone call.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party for transfer to a customer service center.

15. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of verifying that the network address of the telecommunications device is authorized to be notified of the minimum cost period.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of notifying further comprises the step of announcing the minimum cost period.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of notifying further comprises the step of displaying the minimum cost period on a display screen.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein the minimum cost period is at least one of a time of day, a day of week, and a plurality of sequential days.

19. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of displaying the minimum cost period on a web page.

20. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of deactivating the step of notifying the party after receiving a deactivation request.

21. A method within a telecommunication network of notifying a calling party of a least-cost calling plan while initiating a long distance telephone call, comprising the steps of:

receiving a telephone network address corresponding to a telecommunications device that initiated the telephone call;

determining the least-cost calling plan for completing the telephone call based on a plurality of calling plans for a long distance telephone network designated for routing of the telephone call; and

notifying the calling party of the least-cost calling plan.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party for transfer to a service center.

23. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of verifying that the telephone number of the telecommunications device is authorized to be notified of the least-cost calling plan.

24. The method of claim 21, wherein the step of notifying further comprises the step of announcing the least-cost calling plan.

25. The method of claim 21, wherein the step of notifying further comprises the step of displaying the least-cost calling plan on a display screen.

26. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of displaying the least-cost calling plan on a web page after the telephone call is completed.

27. The method of claim 21, wherein the step of notifying occurs prior to completing connection of the telephone call.

28. The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party to abandon the telephone call.

29. In a telecommunication network, a method of notifying a calling party, while making a telephone call, of a least-cost calling plan for completing the telephone call, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for a telephony connection from an originating network address of the calling party to a terminating network address;

setting up the telephony connection to the called party, while executing the steps of:

receiving calling plan information of the originating network address;

comparing the calling plan information to a plurality of calling plans in the telecommunication network so as to select the least-cost calling plan; and

from the telecommunications network, sending a message to the calling party of the selected least-cost calling plan.

30. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party for transfer to a service center after receiving the message.

31. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of verifying that the originating network address of the telecommunications device is authorized to be notified of the least cost calling plan.

32. The method of claim 29, wherein the step of sending the message further comprises the step of announcing the least-cost calling plan.

33. The method of claim 29, wherein the step of sending the message further comprises the step of displaying the least-cost calling plan.

34. The method of claim 33, further comprising the step of displaying the least cost calling plan on a web page.

35. In a packetized network for audio telephony, a method for processing a telephone call of a calling party to a called party, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for a communications connection from an originating address of the calling party to a terminating address, the request including a quality of service level;

retrieving calling plan information of the originating address;

determining a cost value for completing the communications connection based on the calling plan information and the quality of service level in the request ; and

transmitting a notification message of the cost value to the calling party from the telecommunications network while the communications connection is being established within the telecommunications network.

36. The method of claim 35, further comprising the step of verifying that the originating address of the calling party is authorized to receive the notification message.

37. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of transmitting further comprises the step of audibly announcing the notification message.

38. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of transmitting further comprises the step of displaying the notification message on a screen.

39. In a telecommunications network, a method for processing a video telephone call of a calling party to a called party, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for a communications connection from an originating address of the calling party to a terminating address;

retrieving calling plan information of the originating address;

determining a minimum cost period for completing the communications connection based on the calling plan information for the originating address; and

transmitting a notification message including the minimum cost period for display to the calling party from the telecommunications network, while the communications connection is being established within the telecommunications network.

40. The method of claim 39, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party for transfer to a customer service center.

41. The method of claim 39, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party to abandon the video telephone call after the step of transmitting the video message.

42. The method of claim 39, further comprising the step of displaying the minimum cost period on a web page.

43. In a telecommunication network, a method of notifying a calling party, while making a video telephone call, of a least-cost calling plan for completing the video telephone call, comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for a video telephony connection from an originating network address of the calling party to a terminating network address;

setting up the video telephony connection to the called party, while executing the steps of:

receiving calling plan information of the originating network address;

comparing the calling plan information to a plurality of calling plans in the telecommunication network so as to select the least-cost calling plan; and

from the telecommunications network, sending a message to the calling party of the selected least-cost calling plan.

44. The method of claim 43, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party to abandon the video telephone call after the step of sending the message

45. The method of claim 44, further comprising the step of prompting the calling party for transfer to a customer service center.

46. The method of claim 43, wherein the step of sending includes the step of displaying the message.

47. The method of claim 43, wherein the step of sending includes the step of announcing the message.